

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-7 have been examined. Claims 1, 3, 6 and 7 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of newly cited references. Also, the Examiner has indicated that claims 4 and 5 contain allowable subject matter.

I. Preliminary Matter

The Examiner has objected to claim 5 due to an informality. Accordingly, Applicant has amended claim 5 in the manner suggested by the Examiner.

II. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,591,880 to Matsumoto et al. (“Matsumoto”)(assigned to Bridgestone Corporation), U.S. Patent No. 5,211,781 to Adam et al. (“Adam”) and JP 2002-254905 to Aoki (“Aoki”) (assigned to Bridgestone Corporation)

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 3, 6 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Matsumoto, Adam and Aoki.

A. Claim 1

By this Amendment, Applicant has incorporated the allowable subject matter of claim 4 into claim 1. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 1 is now moot.

B. Claims 3, 6 and 7

Applicant submits that claims 3, 6 and 7 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency upon claim 1.

III. Allowable Subject Matter

As set forth above, the Examiner has indicated that claims 4 and 5 contain allowable subject matter. Since the features of claim 4 have been incorporated into claim 1, Applicant has canceled claim 4 without prejudice or disclaimer.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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